Camp David

Winners and Losers

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PREFACE

Alfred M. Lilienthal, a noted American political scientist, once remarked that the world community was often given not even misinformation, but downright fiction concerning the Middle East. But no political event in the Middle East since the Second World War has probably been the object of so many tales, legends and inventions as the Camp David deal and the parties to it. No accord has come under so much fire and raised so many questions as the one signed in 1978 at US President Jimmy Carter's summer retreat by Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin.

Today there is a blue and white flag with a star on it over the Embassy of Israel in Cairo, and Egypt's tricolour over its Embassy in Tel Aviv. All is quiet on the Sinai Peninsula. Israel and Egypt exchange tourists. The Suez Canal is in full service. Sadat, as some Western diplomatic analysts contend, "paved" the way to Israel and, supposedly, showed that it was possible, surmounting the psychological barrier, to bring the Arab-Israeli confrontation to naught. Yet the "peace process" based on the Camp David pattern has never moved beyond the Sadat-Begin accord.

Why? You must agree that this by no means simple question is worth investigating. And the answer to it has to be sought in the events of the ten years since Camp David, by sorting out the tangle of political gestures and developments, disproving fiction and dismissing legends.

In 1974 I happened to watch the military parade in Cairo, marking the first anniversary of the October 1973 war in the Sinai Peninsula. The units participating in it had not won the battle, but they had not lost it either. Then,

looking at the hardware on display, including some Soviet missiles, I felt that our aid and friendly support had helped Egypt to a certain extent overcome the shock caused by the defeat in the Six-Day War of 1967. I also thought that Egypt was entering a new era in its history and that its will would have to be reckoned with both by the Israeli right-wingers and by the American leaders who considered Egypt a "much too restive Arabian horse".

Yet a propaganda campaign was already gaining ground in Egypt, which was rather difficult to comprehend. Its organisers were obviously trying to create the impression that the USSR had turned away from Egypt at a crucial moment and had not supplied it with "the most essential arms", with the result that the successes gained by the Egyptian army were not as impressive as they could have been.

It soon became clear that what lay behind it was the US President's political decision aimed at winding up relations with the USSR. What was the reason for such a turnabout, which was, in a way, one of the prerequisites for the Camp David deal? This is another question I would like to answer in this book.

I had often wondered whether Sadat had ever regretted signing the Camp David treaty. Did he depart from this life convinced that he had been right, having confidence in his new political allies, or was he already doubtful in both respects?

History will never answer these questions. What is known, however, are statements made by the other Camp David participant in later years.

In 1987, former President Jimmy Carter said that the Camp David agreement had failed to fully satisfy the national aspirations of Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Moreover, answering a question from journalists, he said he considered that Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 had ruled out the possibility of a comprehensive Middle East settlement.

Another leader who has since left the political stage, Menachem Begin, declared on the tenth anniversary of the Sadat visit to Jerusalem that the peace treaty with Egypt

was a living document which was extremely important for relations between the two nations. However, the retired General, Ezer Weizman, Defence Minister in the Begin Cabinet, quoted the Prime Minister as having subsequently "regretted" signing the peace treaty—from his extreme right positions...

Two years after the assassination of Sadat, Menachem Begin resigned, making way for Yitzhak Shamir. It was Shamir who, although he had once voted against it, declared on the seventh anniversary of the deal between Israel and Egypt that Camp David had produced a "framework for a general peace settlement in the Middle East and for the assurance of the security of the State of Israel". So how do Yitzhak Shamir and his cohorts see this settlement today and what are they doing to bring it about? I hope the reader will also find an answer to this question in my book.

Finally, we will consider some political legends relating to Camp David. It is up to the reader to conclude who has created the legends. In fact, there are four of them, each with several variations.

First legend. "There is no Palestinian people, nor has there ever been; there have only perhaps been Arabs" living on the territory of Palestine, that is, arrivals from Syria and other Arab countries. The Palestinians have no common culture or ideology, they have no established nation. All they have is radicalism and a desire to destroy Israel. Therefore, Camp David is merely a natural ambition to defuse, bit by bit, the conflict that has been thought up by the Arabs; a conflict which can be easily resolved, on the whole, by a series of separate agreements with Arab countries.

Generally speaking, this legend appeared, or, to be exact, was created long before Camp David and even before the 1973 war. Its creators were Israeli leaders.

There is a more widespread and less radical version which also denies the Palestinians' right to their own statehood, but recognises an objective truth—the existence of the Palestinian people. In July 1973, the then Minister of Defence of Israel, Moshe Dayan, said:

"There is no more Palestine. It's finished. I ought to

have said 'regrettably', but I don't regret it. There are the Palestinians, and there was once a country called Palestine. The Palestinian land has been divided between Israel and Jordan, therefore the Palestinian people exists, but there is no Palestinian state whatsoever. The country named Palestine disappeared in 1948. Palestine must be part of Jordan. Call it a Palestinian zone in a Jordanian Federation, call it whatever you like, but never an independent state."

This version of the legend, or rather this concept, has quite a following in Tel Aviv today.

Second legend. "Israel is prepared for a peace settlement, but the Arabs are not."

In a statement before the US Congress in January 1976, Yitzhak Rabin declared:

"Peace will come when the Arab leaders finally cross the Rubicon from aggressive confrontation to harmonious reconciliation. Then, there is no problem between us that cannot be solved in negotiation. That includes, too, the Palestinian issue, within the geographic and political context of peace with Jordan. When I say Jordan, I do not discount Palestinian representation in the peace delegation of that country. And when I say geography, I do not discount a negotiation concerning the future final peace boundaries of the territories involved.

"For the genuine peace we seek, Israel is ready to give up much and to compromise much on territory. In a negotiation whose sincere shared goal is final reconciliation, we shall go more than half way to assure its success."

The then Prime Minister of Israel must have been speaking for his party—the Ma'arach bloc—rather than for anybody else. For neither at that time, nor ten years later, could the right-wing Likud bloc have been expected to make any territorial concessions whatsoever. Therefore, that statement of his was no more than a legend, considering the political practice of the Israeli Cabinet of "national unity".

As for the "political context of peace with Jordan", the Israeli leaders were firmly convinced that it was possible for the Camp David process to be extended to that country.

Third legend. This claims that although the US has never achieved anything beyond Camp David, it is still trying to tread the path of peace in the Middle East and is employing its whole arsenal of political and diplomatic ammunition to this end.

This legend comes from American sources, as a rule.

In actual fact, Washington was ready not only to make political moves—it was ready to fight as well. *Business Week* pointed out on October 31, 1983, that Reagan had entered the White House hoping to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict—but more ready to back his efforts with military force.

Fourth legend. "The policy of the Soviet Union is an obstacle in the way of a Middle East settlement. The USSR does not recognise Israel within its 1967 frontiers." Despite the obvious facts to the contrary, this legend has been peddled by a number of top-level Israeli leaders. General Raphael Eitan, former Chief of the General Staff of the Israeli Army, asserted that "nobody, except Costa Rica, has ever recognised the 1967 frontiers of Israel." He made this affirmation even after Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko had clearly stated at the Geneva Peace Conference in December 1973:

"The only secure frontiers are legal frontiers recognised by those who are on either side of them. In the case of the Middle East these are the lines of demarcation existing on June 4, 1967."

This is by no means the only legend about the Soviet stand on Middle East settlement. A still more widespread one is that the Soviet Union is simply blocking all peace initiatives, particularly American ones, because they are not its own, and it is afraid to lose the political game in the Middle East.

In this book I intend to show that this type of legend is not supported by facts. It is important to stop believing in myths and to drop illusions if a stable peace in the Middle East is to be brought nearer.

ON THE WAY TO CAMP DAVID

It would seem that enough has already been written about Camp David. There have been full accounts of the meetings, the progress of negotiations and even of the suits that Begin, Carter and Sadat had on when they gave their interviews to journalists. But it turns out that Camp David, like the Great Pyramid of Cheops, is still shrouded in mystery, and from time to time reports appear in the press, shedding light on various events connected with it.

People sooner or later learn the ultimate historical truth, which brings out every detail of bygone events, helping to make a proper assessment of the past. One needs to take a retrospective glance at history to form the right judgement of present political developments and to find the path into the future. So let us have a look at how the protagonists of Camp David have acted on the historical stage before and after the event.

THE STAGE

One hot day in June 1974, I was standing on the balcony of the UN observers' headquarters in Cairo's Heliopolis district, waiting to see the motorcade of President Nixon, who had just arrived in Egypt. Only nine months after yet another Arab-Israeli war, during which the US—Israel's ally—had been branded in Egypt as the "number one enemy of the Arabs", the head of the US administration was given a hero's welcome in Cairo as a peace-maker.

The turnabout was abrupt and unexpected for many. Those who followed the press closely could not fail to notice that it indicated not only the path to an American-Egyptian rapprochement, but also the outlines of the prospective Camp David accord. As *Time* magazine said, President Sadat "gambled" his political future, depending on what he thought would be reliable American support for a settlement with the Israelis. This created the conditions for a full-scale American diplomatic offensive in the Middle East. Its purpose was to keep the Soviet Union out of the process of settlement and to prevent Arab states from rallying on a common anti-imperialist platform.

The concept of the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, was already indicative of the principles of the prospective Camp David—"step-by-step" diplomacy, aimed at dividing the Arab countries involved in the conflict and forcing interim agreements on them.

In 1975, Egypt and Israel signed an agreement on the limited withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Sinai Peninsula and on the creation of a system of American-manned strategic and tactical warning stations there. As a result, Egypt found itself actually outside the struggle for overcoming the aftermath of the 1967 Israeli aggression. Now, for the first time, there was an American contingent between the Israeli and Egyptian forces.

Yet the expected series of separate Arab-Israeli agreements in the wake of that accord did not materialise: most Arab countries rejected the American-Israeli plans. Moreover, America's prestige began to decline again, even in Egypt. In an effort to save the situation, Jimmy Carter, who became President in January 1977, announced the abandonment of "step-by-step" diplomacy and the return to the idea of a comprehensive settlement. Pressure from Arab countries and the position of the Soviet Union, which put forward in March 1977 a concrete programme for a Middle East settlement, prompted the White House into action, striking at the most extremist plans of Israeli leaders. The most resolute move was the Soviet-American Statement of October 1, 1977, on the Middle East. It underlined the necessity for effective action to be taken by

the US and the USSR with a view to achieving an early comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

In Tel Aviv many took this as an extremely dangerous sign. The Begin government mounted an unprecedented campaign, putting pressure on Washington to make it recant that statement. It involved international Zionist circles and the most conservative forces in the American establishment. The campaign succeeded. Five days after the Soviet-American statement, Jimmy Carter and Moshe Dayan, Israel's Foreign Minister, signed a so-called "working document". This nullified the US commitments with regard to a comprehensive Middle East settlement and reverted to the idea of separate agreements between Israel and the Arabs. Shortly afterwards, that line was firmly fixed by the Egyptian President's visit to Jerusalem. Anwar Sadat sought to block the Geneva Conference with the participation of the USSR. Judging by all accounts, he found he could gain more from a separate agreement that could give Egypt back the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for concessions on the Palestinian problem. Sadat's position left Begin free to put forward his plans for an "autonomy" for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip instead of immediately ending the occupation.

One may wonder how Begin ventured into such a hazardous undertaking as the invasion of Lebanon in March 1978. For it was Camp David and the very support of the US administration that were at stake.

The risk was evidently calculated well in advance. The Americans, although nettled by the fact that Begin was antagonising the international community, were already keen on the idea of a separate agreement. That was obviously what they sought to bring home to Sadat, too. In spite of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Egyptian President did not break off his contacts with Begin and stuck solidly to the line he had adopted. The Israelis then realised that Sadat was not to be feared.

In this way, by the autumn of 1978, the Middle East stage was set for Camp David. The backdrop was the ruins of South Lebanese villages and Israeli forts in Sinai. The State Department was thinking over the production. And

then, in September 1978, the actors, Carter, Begin and Sadat, assembled at Camp David.

THE ACTORS

Each of the three actors played his part in that political show to the best of his abilities, probably because each was most anxious for the show to succeed.

Of the three politicians who signed the Camp David accords, Anwar Sadat was, to my mind, the most controversial and, ultimately, the most tragic figure. A lot of things have since been written about Sadat. It has been recalled, for example, that on becoming the Egyptian Head of State after the death of Nasser, he was the subject of irony for quite a long time. It is said that subservience to Nasser earned him the nickname of "Colonel Yes-Sir", and also that in the course of the anti-monarchist revolution of 1952, despite being one of the members of the Free Officers organisation, he managed to stay clear of all the major actions. When the revolution began, Sadat went to the cinema with his children, and then, when summoned to Nasser, he "forgot" his password and was prevented from attending the council. However, although all this seems very strange, the young officer may not have had any deliberate plan to avoid taking part in the revolution...

Some recall Sadat's pro-Nazi feelings and his admiration for Hitler. But it is overlooked that the young Sadat was not the only one to have been lured by Nazi demagogy and by Hitler's promises to free the Arabs from the rule of the British colonial empire. Even some seasoned politicians in the Arab world believed that it was possible to assure the national interests of their countries with the aid of Nazi Germany. Those were misconceptions that are hard to forgive, but easy to understand, I feel.

Some say Sadat revered the West and tried to imitate a one hundred per cent American, copying the easy-going manners of New Yorkers. Some also say that Sadat was on the make, and that evidence was uncovered after his death

to attest to certain outrageous instances of profiteering on the part of his friends and relatives. Some of them did prove to have been involved in shady dealings. But that was not the only indication of the moral climate in the President's family. His brother, an air officer, died in action defending Egypt's skies. Some of Sadat's other relatives distinguished themselves fighting on the Sinai Peninsula.

As for the Sadat family's ambition to build up their fortunes, that is, by and large, the normal thing for bourgeois society. The aim that Sadat set himself was directly linked with his decision to switch Egypt over from a non-capitalist course of development to a purely capitalist one. The essential point is that the President did not do it out of his own self-seeking considerations, but because he sincerely believed that to be a useful and even necessary course for his country to follow.

Sadat was certainly ideologically opposed to socialism and he thought that capitalism would save Egypt from all economic evils such as poverty, inflation, corruption, and backward infrastructure. Taking all that as gospel, he acted accordingly. Camp David was then a stone's throw away, for it was a political course which suited Washington; it would assure the operation of American companies in Egypt as well as American loans.

Yet another factor that encouraged Sadat's gravitation towards Camp David was the rising class of the national bourgeoisie. This was dominated by individuals who had amassed their fortunes out of profiteering and all kinds of shady dealings and had great expectations of an American-Egyptian rapprochement. They had an enormous influence on Sadat.

That was how the prospect of Camp David emerged in broad outline. Having concluded a peace treaty with Israel, Sadat hoped to carry through the "Carter plan" intended for a term of five years; this meant building new towns to decongest the old overpopulated ones, reconstructing the transport and communication system and launching an industrialisation programme. These plans proved to be illusory, as we shall see presently.

In foreign policy, Sadat, having scrapped the treaty with

the USSR and lessened the possibility of Soviet participation in the Geneva Conference, decided to put himself at the mercy of the American-Israeli alliance. His argument was that Palestinian strategy had always depended on Egypt's readiness to shed its own blood for the sake of the Palestinians. Now Egypt was making decisions for itself. Such an approach prejudiced the unity of all-Arab interests in resolving the problem of a Middle East settlement.

One essential factor that stimulated Menachem Begin's interest in a separate peace treaty with Egypt was his concern for his personal standing in his own country. Many Israelis saw the Likud bloc's advent to power as a chance occurrence, and Begin sought to assert both his foothold as Prime Minister and the positions of the entire ruling alliance. Normally opposed to compromises with Egypt, he decided this time that he would be able to keep the Likud in power if he accomplished a major political exercise and proved that a right-wing bloc was capable of appreciably enhancing Israel's security by purely diplomatic methods.

The New York Times analyst David K. Shipler remarked once that the old methods of guerrilla warfare, which Menachem Begin had masterfully applied during the years of British rule, when he led an underground Irgun organisation, had been converted into institutional principles.

What did Shipler have in mind? He meant, first of all, that even in those years, while outwardly demonstrating his readiness for compromise arrangements, Begin often resorted to unexpected extremist actions that shocked both friend and foe. This time, too, Tel Aviv was committing blatant acts of terrorism against the backdrop of an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and a search for new partners for separate agreements.

Begin's credo was a reflection of his manifest ultra-nationalism, whose obverse was constant cruelty and contempt for other peoples. The world knew Begin as the man who organised a massacre in the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin in 1948 to intimidate the Arabs and make them flee their native places or resign themselves to the trigger-happy Zionists who were in control there. Over three

decades later he ordered the Israeli armed forces in Lebanon to do the same thing—to break the fighting spirit of the Arabs. He enforced a doctrine of "strategic terror" in Lebanon in 1982, which was little different, in essence, from the concept of Irgun action.

Begin, a man of small stature and poor eyesight, reserved and tough, more than once demonstrated his immense willpower and overbearing authority. While Sadat's "Napoleonic ambitions" were a legend, those of Begin were real. He earnestly believed in his political farsightedness and the infallibility of his tactical decisions. Camp David was "unknown territory" for him, but during his meetings with his partners he must have realised that none of them had sufficient strength of character to react to his "shock" actions with a radical political decision. Sadat had by then established a major course of action which he could never depart from. Carter, on the contrary, was none too clear about which line to take in a crisis situation. He calculated on a flexible response, which Begin in most cases regarded as being soft.

Nor can one discount the fact that Begin took his decisions against the background of intense political infighting in his own country. Apart from the major rival Zionist parties, it involved new movements, groups and blocs which had sprung up in Israel in the mid-'70s and openly sought to put paid to traditional domineering by the leaders of the older generation. To preserve the positions of the right-wing Zionist movement, Begin was apparently ready to yield more ground to the "moderates" than was his wont. The major concession that the liberal quarters wanted Begin to make was to agree to a separate peace treaty with Egypt.

The main thing was that he was convinced that while accepting that kind of peace, nobody could force him to agree to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state or to the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories.

Why was he so sure? First of all, because of the statements made by the spokesmen for the US administration. Henry Kissinger, the Secretary of State in the Ford

administration, was opposed to the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank because he feared it could fall under the influence of the USSR. When Jimmy Carter announced that he was standing for presidency, he initially adopted a more flexible position. He suggested recognising "the legitimate interests" of the Palestinians. From the Democrats' standpoint, that was a far-reaching move, quite an overture to the Arab states.

The Arabs, however, soon realised that it would be naive to count on that point being pressed home, especially when the question at issue was the Palestinians' right to self-determination. True, Carter argued that Israel must leave some of the occupied Arab territories, including the Sinai Peninsula. But he stated at the same time that he would not try to force Israel to give up control of the Golan Heights or East Jerusalem. The Palestinians, he suggested, should have their own territory under Jordanian administration.

On closer examination, that concept of Carter's could easily be seen as a kind of prototype of Camp David. Of all the occupied territories, Carter appeared to be advising Israel to return the Egyptian ones, while considering it enough for the Palestinians to be assured a kind of autonomy, if only under Jordanian, rather than Israeli, control.

Once he became President, Carter's kindly disposition towards the Arab world fluctuated, while support for Israel was basic to his policy. In exchange, Carter sought to win the backing of American Jews, above all, of the Zionist lobby in Washington. He worried about what he had to do "to prove myself to the Jews", he disclosed to his aides during the election campaign.

It was not only in the run-up to the election that Carter and his staff used their public relations and contact with the press. These served even more to further the political objectives of Carter, the President. Domestic political considerations were quite often decisive for him, even when it came to purely foreign affairs. Commenting on the American President's trip to Cairo, the Egyptian political journalist Muhammad Hassanein Heikal wrote that Carter's aides were dealing with the Middle East problem just as if

they were dealing with the US primaries. They assessed each move at the talks not by its true significance, but by how it would look to the inhabitants of a small town, say, in Wyoming. They counted on the idea that if Egypt could be brought round to signing the treaty, that would open the way to it being signed by Jordan, then by Saudi Arabia and so on, just like a candidate's victory in the primaries, say in New Hampshire, would increase his chances in West Virginia, and the victory in West Virginia would stand him in good stead in Florida and so on...

The Carter administration's close attention to the Middle East problem was not fortuitous. Strictly speaking, Carter who had not yet shown his worth in international politics, could not rely on his declarations on the human rights problem alone to score points in his contest with his political opponents. Peace in the Middle East, however, could earn him political capital. The farmer-president was striving to rise to the level of those politicians whose activity and persistence in search of peace for some region had assured them a place in history.

So all three leaders, full of ambition, were ready to act. The hour of the first show had struck.

THE SHOWS

On November 9, 1977, speaking at the opening of a session of the People's Assembly of Egypt, Anwar Sadat announced that he was prepared to go to the world's end, "even to the Knesset", to settle the Middle East crisis. Neither the Egyptian Foreign Office, nor Sadat's own advisers took those words literally, believing them to be nothing more than rhetoric. Naturally, even the local press was told not to report them. Yet Sadat did want that phrase to reach the American administration. So a special message went to Washington, in which Sadat officially expressed his desire to address the members of the Israeli Parliament. Begin responded by sending an invitation for the Egyptian President to come to Jerusalem for discussions, it was

emphasised, about a permanent peace between Israel and Egypt.

One point I now want to make is that, whatever Sadat's motives at the time, the trip to Jerusalem was in itself an act of courage. After all, he was not merely risking being condemned by the Arab world, but exposing himself to danger—the bullet of a political opponent could well have found him already at that juncture. But Sadat did take that apparently desperate step, evidently convinced that it would pay off a hundred-fold.

Sadat's speech to the Knesset rather smacked of lecturing. But I think he was well aware that nothing he might say about a Middle East settlement would have any significance whatsoever. The drama was to be staged by a single producer—the United States—which would take into account the Israeli and, to a very negligible extent, the Egyptian interests.

To demonstrate this, let us recall what the Egyptian President said in Jerusalem.

Anwar Sadat declared in the Knesset: *"I have not come here for a separate agreement between Egypt and Israel... An interim peace... will not bring permanent peace based on justice in the entire region... in the absence of a just solution of the Palestinian problem."*

Yet it was precisely such a separate peace treaty that he signed—one that left the Palestinian problem unresolved.

Anwar Sadat declared in the Knesset: *"I have not come to you to seek a partial peace, namely to terminate the state of belligerency at this stage and put off the entire problem to a subsequent stage."* The state of belligerency between Egypt and Israel was terminated indeed, but the entire Middle East problem, and more particularly, the Palestinian issue, became even more poignant.

Anwar Sadat declared in the Knesset: *"There are Arab territories which Israel has occupied and still occupies by force. We insist on complete withdrawal from these territories, including Arab Jerusalem.*

"It is inadmissible that anyone should conceive the special status of the city of Jerusalem within the framework of annexation or expansionism. It should be a free and

open city for all believers." But two days before the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, Begin declared that Israel would never return to the 1967 borders, that it would never give back all the Arab lands it had occupied, and that it would never give up a unified Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, nor would it ever agree to that city being divided and its Arab part reverting to Arab sovereignty. And Sadat forgot about his own words.

Anwar Sadat declared in the Knesset: *"It is no use to refrain from recognising the Palestinian people and their right to statehood as their right of return."* However, the subsequent negotiations with Begin and Carter confirmed the Camp David decisions, excluding the creation of a Palestinian state. Just before the signing of the peace treaty, Menachem Begin declared in the Knesset that he would never let a Palestinian state be established.

There is yet another fact to indicate that in the Jerusalem show Sadat played the humiliating role of an extra. No sooner had he arrived in Jerusalem than Begin sent his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Moshe Dayan, to see him and transmit the following secret request: Mr. Sadat was welcome to speak of anything he liked in the Knesset, except for the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation). He was told that if he mentioned that organisation, it would infuriate Israeli public opinion. It became clear later on, however, that Begin's purpose in issuing that request was to create the best possible conditions for presenting his annexationist programmes. As early as December, Begin did put forward his "autonomy" plan for the population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which the Carter administration immediately approved.

True, Sadat was not always satisfied with playing the extra. In January 1978, when the deliberations of the hastily established Egyptian-Israeli political commission fell through, Sadat warned the US and Israel that he was going to announce his resignation because the negotiations had reached a deadlock. Then, Sadat said, he would organise a "mass movement for his comeback", return to office and embark on the war path again. But these statements hardly frightened either Begin or the Americans.

Carter, Begin and Sadat got together at Camp David on September 5. Two documents were signed—"Framework for Peace in the Middle East" and "Framework for a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel". Under the former, Israel agreed to withdraw its forces from the Sinai Peninsula. True, under the Camp David accord, the return of Sinai was to be on condition that the major part of the peninsula would be demilitarised and Egyptian sovereignty over it limited. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were to be established even before the ending of the Israeli occupation of the Egyptian lands.

Those were all serious concessions on Sadat's part. Yet the principal one was his consent to the Israeli plan for the "solution" of the Palestinian problem. The "Framework for Peace in the Middle East", which Sadat accepted at Camp David, did not mention either the PLO or the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. The Palestinian problem was to be resolved on the basis of the Begin "autonomy" plan, which did not provide for the pullout of the Israeli occupation forces from the Palestinian lands but only for their transfer to strategically important sectors. As decided at Camp David, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was free to join in the discussion of the "autonomy" plan. Yet Jordan abstained, which does it credit.

Were Carter and Begin a hundred per cent sure that Sadat could be made to accept all their demands? I think they were. All the prerequisites were there, and an appropriate setting had also been created in Camp David.

For 13 days Carter, Sadat and Begin, each with just a few aides, were, in the words of Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, "isolated from the outside world, sitting like a secret conclave electing the Pope." It was clear from the start that President Carter could not allow his much-advertised political move to end in failure. It had to be a success, or at least a semblance of success. Therefore, Heikal wrote, Begin's inflexibility would inevitably mean greater pressure on Sadat.

"On the last Friday at Camp David, the final appeal was made to him," Heikal wrote, "and I suspect it probably sounded something like this: 'Of course, you may return to

Cairo without any agreement, but if you do, I won't be able to get the military and economic aid from Congress which you say Egypt needs. You will return to the Arab world, which is demonstrating open hostility towards you. So you will get nothing from us, and you can't expect anything from them. But if we are successful, that will greatly improve my re-election prospects for 1980. If you help me now, I will probably be here for six more years, and one can do much in the space of six years.' " That appeal must have worked.

Heikal and other observers in the Arab world warned that all of Sadat's promises to the Palestinians would be disavowed in practice by the Israelis. That is exactly what happened. Right after the Camp David meeting, Begin announced that Israel would under no circumstances permit a Palestinian state to be established. It all amounted to dotting the i's and reaffirming Sadat's final surrender to the Israeli demands.

It was not at Camp David that the next act of the drama took place, Heikal writes. President Carter knew that what had happened there would shock the so-called moderate Arab regimes, particularly Saudi Arabia and Jordan. He did not want them lining up to oppose the accord, and so he sent his Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, there on a delicate mission. When Vance arrived in Riyadh, Prince Fahd told him that the United States was dangerously ignoring Saudi Arabia's basic principle of defending the holy places of Islam, like Jerusalem. A few months previously nobody could have imagined the Saudis sitting down with the Baath Socialists of Iraq and leaders of South Yemen and signing a joint communique. But this is what they did. And it is not surprising that it was so difficult to elaborate a communique on Vance's visit to Riyadh.

When Cyrus Vance came to Amman, it was King Hussein's turn to express his misgivings. He pointed out to Vance that Jordan was mentioned at least 15 times in the Camp David accords, but nobody had found it necessary to consult the Jordanian government while the talks were in progress. Only after everything was over, was the king informed that he, too, could play a part. What part? "You

are asking me," he said, "to act as policeman together with the Israelis against the Palestinians."

The third act took place when the leaders returned home. There were new considerations and anxieties for them to ponder. There was a proliferation of conflicting interpretations of what Camp David meant. To rescue the political triumph of his presidency, Jimmy Carter had to throw the whole prestige of his position onto the scales of his Middle East trip. That inevitably made it not so much a yet-another round of the talks as a political show, staged mostly for the benefit of the American public.

President Carter wanted to return home with a scrap of paper already signed by the Contracting Parties. But Begin stood in the way; he distorted the Israeli constitutional rules by insisting that the agreement had first to be approved by the Knesset before he could sign it. So the show had to be transferred once again to Washington, but by that time it was beginning to get rather tedious. After Camp David and Cairo, the stage laid out on the White House lawn evoked fewer emotions.

Sadat and Begin signed a separate peace treaty in Washington on March 26, 1979. Under its terms, Egypt was obliged to refrain from supporting anti-Israeli forces and also to give priority to Sadat's commitments under this treaty before those under any accords with Arab countries, which in itself seemed incredible, considering Egypt's membership of the League of Arab States.

A no less essential point here was that the US, in accordance with the documents appended to the treaty, assumed the role of guarantor of the fulfilment of the terms of the pact and, in addition, became an indispensable party to negotiations about the future of the occupied lands in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

One may say that if the US was aiming to establish military and political control over the Middle East at that time, it did achieve its objective as far as two capitals—Cairo and Tel Aviv—were concerned. One open question remained: was there anybody else who gained from that separate deal?

WHO GAINED WHAT?

The separate peace treaty was a political reality which was readily accepted by Sadat, Begin and Carter. The peoples of Egypt and Israel **had to** accept that peace. But hardly anybody fully realised at the time what would come out of that separate deal.

Today many political scientists around the world agree that the American-Israeli-Egyptian deal in Camp David and the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt have not only complicated the Arab peoples' struggle for eliminating the consequences of the Israeli aggression and for a comprehensive Middle East settlement; they have actually stimulated the aggressiveness of the Israeli right-wingers, who are committed to a "final" resolution of the Palestine problem by force.

Camp David split the Arab world and knocked Egypt, the largest and most advanced nation of the region, out of the ranks of countries campaigning for the elimination of the consequences of the 1967 Israeli aggression and for the right of self-determination to be granted to the Palestinian Arab people.

One result of Camp David has been to take the military and political alliance between Israel and the United States a stage ahead, permitting Israel to build up its military potential to unprecedented proportions. Tel Aviv became fully confident that it was capable of further blocking the process of a just peace settlement in the region, staging acts of aggression against any Arab country and getting away with it.

Judge for yourselves. In March 1978, that is, when the talks between Sadat and Begin on the terms of a separate

peace treaty were still going on, Israel launched a full-scale invasion of southern Lebanon, with a force of some thirty thousand men and officers. On July 30, 1980, the Knesset passed a bill proclaiming a "unified" Jerusalem to be the "eternal and indivisible" capital of Israel, which meant annexing the East, that is the Arab part of the city. In June 1981, the Israeli Air Force carried out a treacherous raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor just outside Baghdad. In the same year, Israel announced the annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights, seized in the course of the 1967 aggression. Finally, on June 6, 1982, Israel once more invaded Lebanon, with a force about 100,000 strong, advancing as deep inside Lebanese territory as to reach and blockade Beirut. The aggression left tens of thousands of civilians dead.

That is to say that Lebanon, Syria and Iraq have all been the targets of Israeli aggression since Camp David.

Each of Israel's acts of aggression has drastically strained the international situation, heightened tension and impaired relations between the super-powers.

One might ask, however, whether the two countries which signed the separate peace treaty at Camp David have not gained something by it, after all? In striking that deal, they naturally counted on deriving certain political and economic dividends.

Let us see if they have gained anything.

WHAT DID EGYPT GAIN?

When Egypt and Israel signed the peace treaty, one American participant in the talks asserted that the US had finally succeeded in creating "a machinery for building bridges between Israel and its neighbours".

That was Washington's political design. It must evidently have also been that of President Sadat, who presumed that other Arab countries would have to follow his example. Jordan was considered to be one of the potential parties to the Camp David process. However, King Hussein

never agreed to join the American initiative, despite strong pressure from Washington. Further "arm-twisting" would have been pointless, as American political analysts discovered: the Camp David process had clearly reached a dead-end. Neither was there anything gained from exerting pressure on King Hassan of Morocco, on Saudi Arabia, on the Emirates or on Lebanon. It resulted in the greater unity of Libya and Syria and a closer relationship between Syria and Iraq.

The unity, which the Arab world demonstrated at least formally regarding Sadat, the "renegade", was particularly manifest at the Baghdad Summit, which declared a "holy war" against Sadat and his policy.

In January 1979, the Italian magazine *L'Europeo* justly noted that Egypt had to face the unanimous condemnation of all Arab countries and was shown that it was not enough to have a sole ally, even one as powerful as the US. Not surprisingly, two Egyptian Ministers of Foreign Affairs resigned while the talks were in progress, and the authorities had to use rather tough reprisals against left-wing elements and also against certain Army groups and religious leaders.

Sadat's idea of strengthening his power by stabilising Egyptian society to some extent with dollar injections into the economy, proved to be a delusion. In fact, it was the opposition to the regime that was strengthened.

The impoverishment of the middle classes and the peasantry, and the consequent social tension have been a key element behind the growth of religious fundamentalism. It was representatives of groups belonging to this movement who carried out an assassination attempt on Sadat in October 1981 and tried to stage a rebellion in Asyut.

Many of the leaders and members of the fundamentalist movement were put into prison by Sadat at one time or another. Others went underground to carry on. And after Sadat's death, the new Egyptian leadership had to get down to fighting the most radical religious fundamentalist groups, arresting their leaders for sabotage and anti-government activities.

In February 1986, a heavy blow was dealt to the prestige of the government that took over Sadat's Egypt when the soldiers of the Central Security Service, the riot squads, rebelled. They burnt down hotels, bars and night clubs in Giza, along the highway leading to the pyramids, before their uprising was quelled by Army units.

Over a hundred people died in those clashes. At first, the government looked for deep-seated motives behind the events and tried to identify the role of the Islamic fundamentalists or outside forces in what had happened. Yet no evidence of either kind was found. The reason turned out to be much simpler and closer to the surface—the rebellion had been provoked by the extremely hard material conditions of the soldiers and by the rumour that there was a plan to extend their term of service by one year.

That episode showed once more that the greatest threat to Egypt's stability and indeed its entire future lay, above all, in social injustice, and in this sense Camp David, in all probability, played its part.

In 1979, the Italian magazine *Mondo* described the country's economic situation after Camp David as follows:

"American money (one billion dollars) has done much to shore up the balance of trade which has also gained from the fall in world market prices of some goods imported by Egypt in large quantities... But along with these favourable results, there is a multitude of problems that have to be resolved. Here are the main ones:

"The country has a million and a half unemployed, and every year employment also needs to be provided for another 300,000 young people, apart from ex-servicemen.

"Peace has touched off a powerful demographic explosion. Within a short space of time, the population growth rate increased from 3.4 per cent to 3.7 per cent.

"Agriculture, the backbone of the Egyptian economy, is on the decline.

"The nation's administrative staff is still paralysed, and the infrastructure needs overhauling.

"The waste of resources is practically incalculable. Nine of the twelve Aswan High-Dam turbines are out of service. The Helwan Steel Plant, with a design output of 1.5 million

tons of steel a year, is producing only 600,000 tons, while the import of utterly useless Western and Japanese goods is growing.

"Inflation, at around 15 per cent a year, can rival only that in Israel, but in Egypt the rising cost of living has not been followed by an increase in wages."

That is how it was in 1979. But perhaps hopes were pinned on a more distant future, say, a decade later?

The statistics of recent years, however, produce a depressing picture. The foreign debt in 1986 topped 30 billion dollars, and it was only an emergency aid of half a billion dollars from the US that saved Egypt from bankruptcy. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund then warned President Mubarak that his country's budget deficit and the gap between imports and exports had reached a critical level.

It is worth recalling at this point that the population of Egypt is 52 million. Cairo alone has just about 12 million residents and its population is expected to reach 20 million by the end of the century. Poor peasants are migrating to the capital and other cities on a large scale.

The housing shortage is critical. Cairo alone will need three and a half million flats by the end of the century. Electricity and drinking water supplies are often disrupted, and the sewerage system is in a deplorable condition.

And all this at a time when the four pillars of the Egyptian economy—oil sales proceeds, remittances from Egyptians working abroad, tourism and Suez Canal revenues—are not as reliable as they used to be, by a long chalk. The Mubarak government has already carried out a number of reforms and is planning more. But I feel that a stable and dynamic economy is still a long way off.

Even before Camp David, Sadat had launched a policy of denationalisation and open doors to foreign monopolies. Camp David was to secure more big foreign loans and to get as many foreign companies as possible to come to Egypt. Economists justly noted that it was not industry and agriculture that private capital set its sights on, but the places that were sure to bring the highest possible profits,

such as trade, resale of real estate and imported commodities, the hotel business and tourism.

While in Egypt, I watched the rise of the "fat cats", the Egyptian nouveaux riches who were setting up stores, restaurants and subcontract enterprises. They were in a hurry to grab what they could and to make their fortunes through unscrupulous blackmarketeering, gaining top profits in whatever way they could. Villas to let were being built post-haste. In those years fortunes running into millions were made through drug trafficking and illegal export-import operations.

Sadat's relatives were also involved in that money-grubbing process.

So the Egyptian people en masse gained nothing from Sadat's policy. Nor did the country's economy gain anything from Camp David.

But maybe Egypt gained something at least in the military sense? Since the late '70s the US has been supplying Egypt with a wide range of military hardware and equipment. In 1986 alone, US military-economic aid to Egypt amounted to about 1,300 million dollars. The Egyptian Armed Forces receive from the US scores of aircraft, armoured vehicles, artillery, radar stations, modern electronic equipment for the Air Force and for air defence, warships and speedboats. Of course, all this is "on a reciprocal basis". In exchange, the Egyptian leadership has granted the Pentagon the right to use the country's territory for stationing its Rapid Deployment Force. Joint exercises of Egyptian and American troops have become a regular practice, and their scale is ever increasing. The Joint American-Egyptian Military Coordination Committee created in 1982 continues to function actively.

American military and technical assistance has substantially stimulated the Egyptian munitions industry. For the most part, the types of military hardware and equipment which Egypt is producing, and intends to continue producing, have been created in the United States. So the US military-industrial complex is deriving a handsome profit from the sale of licences to Egypt.

In short, whichever area you consider, Egypt's gain from Camp David appears very dubious.

WHAT DID ISRAEL GAIN?

Israel's gain from Camp David appears to be obvious, at first glance. The Egyptian army ceased to be hostile and, besides, it turned out to be separated from Israel's not only by the sands of Sinai, but by the so-called Multinational Force as well. True, Israel surrendered its Sinai air force bases, Etzion and Eitam, to the Egyptians, but the Americans replaced them with similar bases, Ramon and Ovda, in the Negev Desert. The construction of the bases cost over a billion dollars, of which 800 million were presented to Israel by the United States.

It is clear that in the strategic sense, Israel lost nothing on its Western borders.

In the military-political area, everything appeared to be going equally well. Camp David contributed towards strengthening the military-political links between Israel and the United States, which were formalised in the early '80s. Documents of particular importance to both countries were the 1981 "Memorandum of Mutual Understanding in Strategic Cooperation" and the 1983 agreement "On Strategic Cooperation". In accordance with those documents, Washington undertook to expand comprehensive, mostly military, aid to Israel. In addition, by 1990 the Israeli Armed Forces were to receive from the United States Lance theatre missile units, F-15 and F-16 aircraft, up-to-date armoured vehicles and other military hardware. The US assisted its Middle East partner in building three diesel-engined submarines. To boost Israel's economy, the Reagan administration gave the go-ahead for a number of American firms to place upwards of two billion dollars' worth of orders in Israel. In addition, many US companies pledged to increase direct aid to the Israeli munitions industry. It was announced that Israel's research centres and firms would be given a part to play in the Star Wars

programme. According to Western estimates, in 1986 alone the United States granted Israel 4,800 million dollars, of which a considerable proportion has since been used for military purposes.

But, having given so much, the United States demanded a good deal in return. The Pentagon actually obtained the rights to use Israeli territory for its troops and the build-up of arms and supplies.

While there was, after all, a certain balance of gains and losses in Israeli-American relations, the gains were far fewer in Israel's relations with other countries than Begin and his supporters had expected.

In spite of Israel's diplomatic attacks, the European Economic Community refused to open a representative office in Jerusalem. Nor did most of the governments concerned move their embassies over there. The Begin government's attempt to establish Jerusalem in this way as the "legitimate and indivisible" capital failed. Of all European countries only The Netherlands recognised it as the capital of Israel. The recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) by some European countries, even after Camp David, caused serious concern in Tel Aviv. Early in March 1979 Israel made official protests to France, Great Britain and West Germany over their public utterances in support of the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

The then French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing delivered a telling blow to Israel while he was in Kuwait and Jordan during his Middle East tour. He stressed that the Palestinian people must acquire their right to self-determination, within the framework of a just peace, and pointed out that the achievement of such a peace required the involvement of an organisation representing the Palestinian people in the negotiations.

As early as 1977 the heads of government of some of the EEC countries recognised the necessity for Palestinian national statehood. They declared that the Palestinians should participate in negotiating an overall settlement of the Middle East conflict. Early in 1979 similar statements were made by other official representatives of the EEC

countries. Soon afterwards, Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Joseph Lenihan, declared that his country recognised the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Tel Aviv also received an unexpected blow from other quarters. Anwar Sadat, who the Begin Cabinet so greatly relied on as being easy to deal with, refused to open an Egyptian embassy in Jerusalem. Furthermore, in an effort to allay the other Arab countries' indignation over Camp David, the Egyptian authorities made increasingly frequent declarations to the effect that there was nothing in common between Sadat's plan of self-rule for the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Begin's idea of limited autonomy. That is to say that by the early '80s, the Israeli authorities could no longer even rely on a tractable Egyptian President.

Still less could Israel count on any change for the better in relations with Egypt after Sadat's death. In 1987, Eliahu Ben Elissar, Israel's first Ambassador to Egypt, stated:

"Egypt wanted Sinai back, and she got it. She wanted a certain calm in relations with Israel, and she got it. A 'warm' relationship has never been the main object. Our disappointment 10 years after the Sadat visit is due to there being no day-to-day dialogue between the governments... There is no communication or friendly rapprochement between the peoples of Israel and Egypt."

So Israel secured no breakthrough in relations with Egypt in the political sense.

But what about economic relations?

When Prime Minister Menachem Begin was presented with the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1978, he said:

"Cooperation in the field of agriculture and its development will turn the desert into a blossoming garden. The development of industry holds out the promise of a better life. Sources of water supply will be tapped, and the almost year-round sunshine will be put at the service of the common needs of all countries."

After Camp David, many people in Tel Aviv found it an opportune moment for an economic invasion of Egypt. There were suggestions that the small, yet dynamic Jewish

State and the largest Arab country would complement each other in the economic sense. Advocates of great joint ventures claimed that Israel could offer technical specialists to Egypt with its numerous population and relatively large territory. Some even predicted that one upshot of the peace treaty would be the gradual ending of the long-standing Arab economic boycott of Israel.

Yet when an Egyptian official was asked how realistic all that was, he grinned. "Israel is a deficit country, just like ourselves. We both of us stand with an outstretched hand," he remarked.

The Israeli bid for economic cooperation gained no response from Cairo. That was largely due to the resentment over what the Egyptians saw as Israel's patronising tone, being conscious of its technological superiority.

But the main reason behind Cairo's reluctance to develop economic relations with Israel was the fear that it would further sour its relations with other Arab countries.

The situation has changed little in the past ten years. The only thing that has, perhaps, made some headway in relations between the two countries is tourism, though it is mostly one way: Cairo has not been officially encouraging trips to Israel.

Inside the country, the enthusiasm generated by the separate deal was fast evaporating. There was no change for the better in the nation's economic life. And the Israelis began to wonder why in time of peace they had to make as many sacrifices as before, if not more. Some turned out to fear peace more than they feared war.

True, after Camp David, the US, striving to ease its ally's economic situation, granted it far greater benefits than before. In the early 1980s, the two countries signed a "Free Trade Area Agreement", which meant opening their markets to each other's commodities duty-free. Israel secured an outlet for its exported products in the US markets, free from customs tariffs and all other restrictions.

Using that agreement, Israel hoped to bring its exports up to nine billion dollars by the late '80s. In their forecasts, Israeli economists counted on the high purchasing capacity of the American market.

However, some Israeli economists expressed right from the start their concern that the flow of American products would cramp national industry, disorganising it and causing unemployment. That concern proved to be well founded, especially as regards agricultural produce. In exchange, Israel derived generally insignificant benefits on the American markets.

Naturally, summing up all of Israel's gains and losses in the wake of Camp David, it is impossible to come to a categorical conclusion.

After Camp David I more than once heard diplomatic analysts say that Israel's main victory consisted in getting the gravity of the Palestinian problem mitigated through that separate deal.

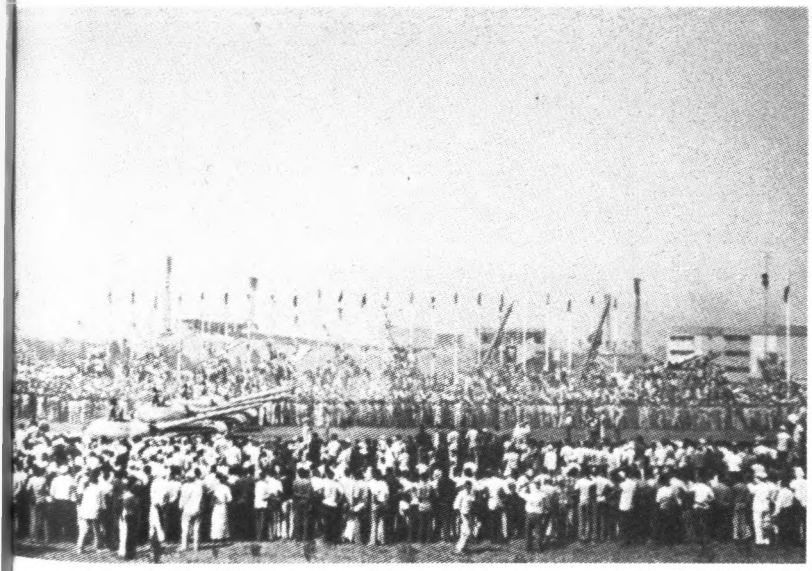
In Begin's opinion, the plan he put forward in 1977 for an "administrative autonomy" in the Palestinian lands, occupied since 1967, could serve as a sufficiently effective lightning rod. Yet he never stopped repeating that the "autonomy" he proposed could in no way mean "sovereignty", and he categorically rejected any form of Palestinian independence.

As is known, the Camp David accords allowed Israeli armed forces to be stationed in the autonomous zone. Besides, Israel has retained the right to build roads in the West Bank and Gaza in accordance with its own needs and considerations.

The natural question was how could such an autonomy, devoid of any real substance, avoid clashing with the recognition of the "legitimate rights of the Palestinians" mentioned in the Camp David accords? Begin's official position was that there had been no recognition of any kind. Reference was made to one of the six addenda to the accords. President Carter said that Begin had explained the expression "the Palestinian people" appearing in the text as meaning the "Arabs of the land of Israel". The words "independence", "self-determination" and "Palestinian sovereignty" did not figure at all in the Camp David accords.

As was only to be expected, the inhabitants of the occupied territories categorically rejected the administra-

The Israeli Armed Forces suffered heavy losses during the Yom Kippur war of 1973. A number of Israeli crack tank units were routed. The Egyptians warmly welcomed their army at a military parade a year after the war, the army which shattered the myth about the impossibility to withstand the Israeli blitzkriegs.

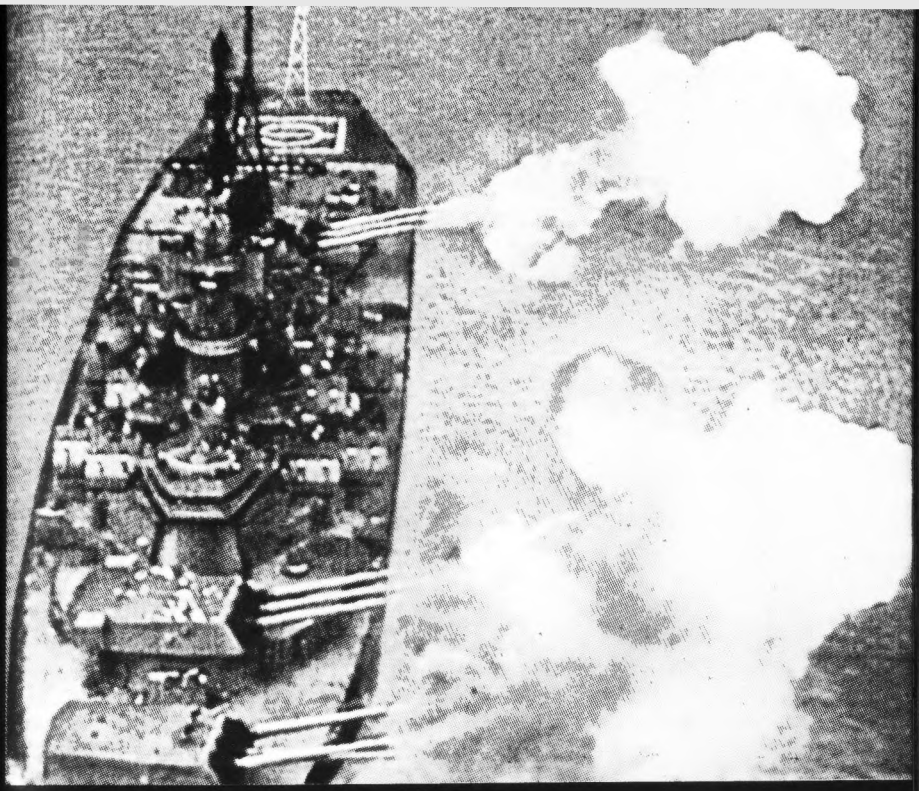


In December 1973 the US magazine *Newsweek* represented thus the activities of the then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in the Middle East. By prompting the next move now to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, now to Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir the United States was imposing its "formula of coexistence" on the countries of the region. This formula later led to the Camp David accords.

Only nine months after another Arab-Israeli war, during which the ARE condemned the United States as "the number one enemy of the Arabs", US President Richard Nixon arrived in Egypt in June 1974. He was greeted as a peace champion in Cairo.

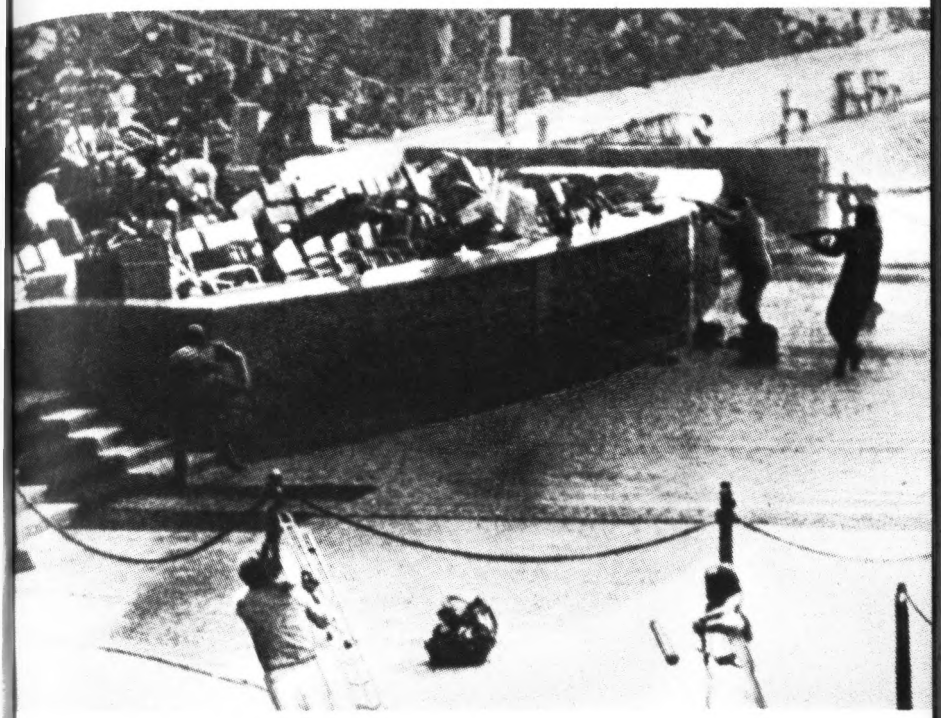
US President Jimmy Carter, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin met in Camp David in September 1978. The President of Egypt succumbed to practically all the demands made by the other participants in the talks. This was the start of a policy aimed at concluding a separate "peace treaty" between Israel and the ARE.

Camp David meant only one thing to young Palestinians: the need to intensify their struggle for independence, for the right to be the masters of their own destiny.

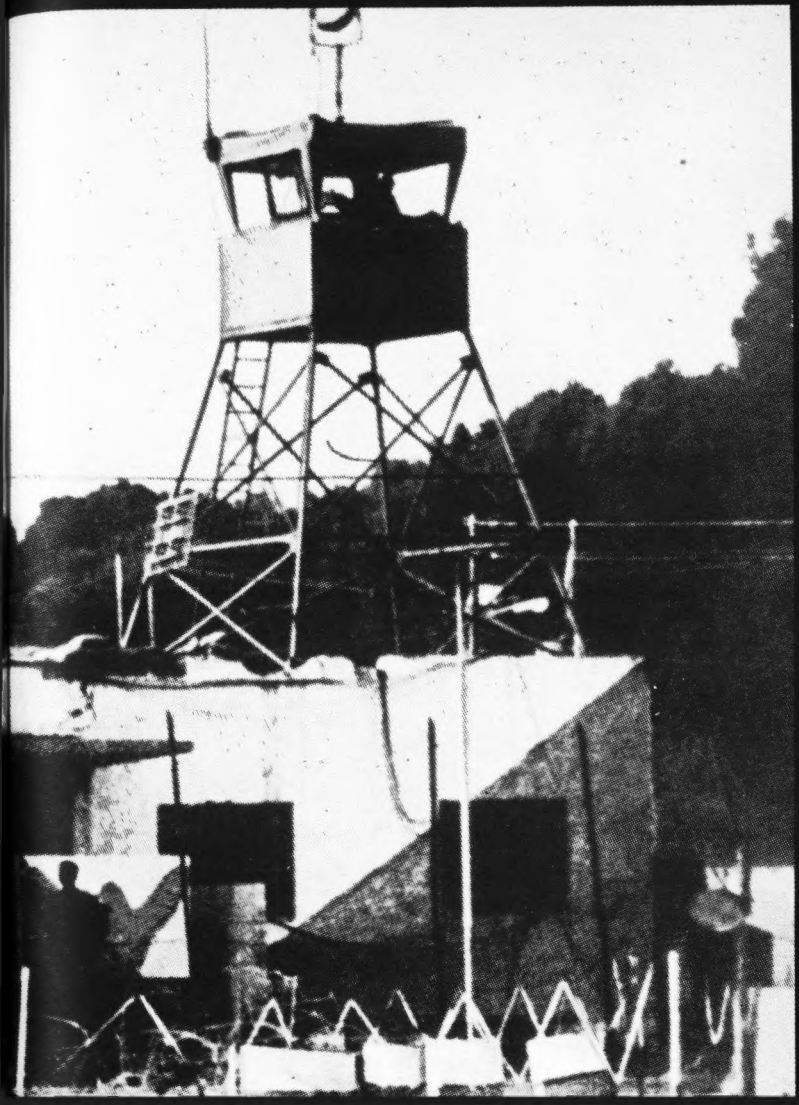


The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 brought incalculable misfortunes and suffering to the Lebanese people. Tens of thousands were killed or injured and many towns and villages in the south of the country were destroyed. A US naval squadron brought to the Lebanese shores bombarded the positions of the national-patriotic forces.

In October 1981, Anwar Sadat was murdered during a traditional military parade. Sadat's death was regarded by the majority of Egyptians as the logical and inevitable consequence of his foreign policy.



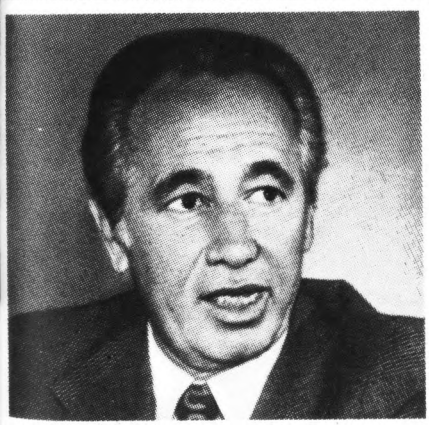
Having become the Prime Minister of Israel, leader of the right Likud bloc, Yitzhak Shamir, started zealously implementing plans for colonising the occupied Arab lands.



Terror and tyranny reign supreme in the Palestinian lands occupied by Israel.

All Palestinians, regardless of age, are against the occupation regime.

Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip demonstrate in support of the Palestinian demand for the creation of their own state.



Peace champions in Israel demand an end to the occupation of foreign territories. Shimon Peres and other leaders of the Labour Party are compelled to reckon with these demands.

The UN Security Council discussing the possibility of convening an International Conference on the Middle East.

tive autonomy project. Never since the Six-Day War had there been such unanimity between the various groups of the Palestinian community. There were mass meetings in East Jerusalem, in Nablus, in Beit Lahm, at Birzeit University near Ramallah, and in Gaza. The Palestine Liberation Organisation branded the Begin project as a plan for neocolonialist subjugation of the Palestinian people and the annexation of their lands.

Significantly, some political news analysts in the Arab world described Begin's "administrative autonomy" project as **provocative**; the advocation of the scheme was bound to raise tensions in the occupied lands, and the Israeli authorities would not fail to use this opportunity for a crackdown on Palestinian patriots.

At the same time, Begin's refusal to take into account the national interests of the Palestinian people gave rise to a patriotic feeling among those sections of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas who had at one time come near to favouring the creation of an autonomous Palestinian region within a confederation with Jordan.

So what the Camp David accords actually produced was not the "pacification" but the consolidation of the Palestinians, who realised that the objective was to leave them forever at the mercy of militant Zionists and to rob them of all hopes of eventual independence.

Opposition to Camp David signified the onset of a new stage of armed confrontation in the region, climaxed by Israel's invasion of Lebanon, which led not only to the loss of thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese lives, but to heavy Israeli casualties as well. Apart from that, it cost Israel upwards of eight billion dollars.

WHAT DID THE UNITED STATES GAIN?

Naturally, where there is a gamble, there must be a winner. It is equally obvious that it was the United States

who gained the most at the expense of Israel and Egypt. Yet one should work it all out carefully to see a true balance of gains and losses.

Camp David provided the American administration with quite a trump-card: now there were already two countries in the Middle East—the major parties to the Israeli-Arab confrontation, into the bargain—that had to depend on Washington as an ally and, in a critical situation, as a defender. Naturally, this dependence also implied certain commitments on the part of the US.

Commitments of a military-political nature can carry conviction if backed by military power. Hence the conclusion that the US Armed Forces must become an impressive factor in the Middle East.

Washington's assumption of serious commitments meant incurring considerable expenses. It cost the US around two billion dollars a year to build up its naval presence in the Indian Ocean. But material support for its Camp David partners came to a far greater sum—15 billion dollars in the first three years.

The strategic success of the United States was beyond question. For one of the main results of the Camp David deal was the creation of the so-called Multinational Force on the Sinai Peninsula. Technically, that force was supposed to monitor compliance with the Egyptian-Israeli treaty. In practice, however, it had a far broader mission. *The New York Times,* quoting a Pentagon source, said that the force could be used in an emergency for "operations outside Sinai". That makes it clear why the deployment of the Multinational Force on Egyptian territory provoked misgivings in many quarters of the Arab world.

Of the total Multinational Force of 2,500, the American contingent accounts for around 1,200. It is replaced once in every six months, which enables considerable contingents of the US Rapid Deployment Force to be trained right in the Middle East region.

The Multinational Force is under a joint command, headed by a US representative, as per agreement.

In fact, the very terms of the agreement concerning the

Multinational Force place the US contingent's activities outside all control.

Yet in spite of all these advantages, the United States made the Middle East situation far more complex, even for itself. Italian political correspondent, Sandro Ottolenghi warned in *L'Europeo* magazine that in organising the biggest diplomatic exercise since the Vietnam War, American leaders risked creating a situation fraught with unpredictable consequences for the entire Middle East region. Israel's increased post-Camp David aggressiveness has repeatedly borne out that warning. It has more than once put Washington in an awkward and often politically losing position.

AFTER CAMP DAVID

In February 1983, *Reader's Digest* carried an article by two former Presidents, Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, who called on Israel and countries of the Arab world to come together and, "fostered" by American efforts, "to snatch peace from the cauldron that has been the Middle East."

The two men, who set so much store by the Middle East problem, wrote:

"It is incumbent upon the Begin government to realise that, however it may define its intentions in the West Bank and Gaza, however it may seek to rationalise its actions there, the evidence is convincing to the Arab world and beyond that the Israeli leaders have simply chosen to seize these lands and hold them by force. This policy is the major obstacle to any moderate Arab initiatives for a peaceful resolution of differences.

"Our painful conclusion from events thus far is that the Begin government is not living up to those commitments. It has shown little inclination to grant real autonomy to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza areas. It has continued to confiscate properties in occupied territories and to build settlements as if to create a de facto Israeli ascendancy there. It has publicly repudiated the Reagan peace plan, which calls for a freeze on Israeli settlements."

The former US Presidents called on Israel to revert to the commitments undertaken at the Camp David summit, and in particular, to the readiness they had all expressed there for "the resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects."

That was a rather timely call, to be sure, coming as it did only half a year after Israel's invasion of Lebanon. The

former Presidents had quite rightly outlined the annexationist and colonialist activities of Begin and his Cabinet in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the Likud's persistent expansionist ambitions. But I feel that both Ford and Carter must have indulged in wishful thinking as far as Israel's once-declared readiness for "the resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects" is concerned.

For to resolve the Palestinian problem in all its aspects means, first and foremost, to guarantee the Palestinian Arab people the right to self-determination. Yet that was never part of the Israeli leaders' plans.

Let me remind you that the letters on the Palestinian problem appended to the treaty made no reference to the temporary nature of the so-called self-rule, and this therefore presented the Likud leaders with an opportunity to claim that the self-rule regime was final.

But while the Israeli rightists had no intention whatsoever of looking for a constructive approach to the resolution of the Palestinian problem, let alone "in all its aspects", such intentions were expressed by other political movements in Israel, which realised that peace and Israel's holding the occupied territories were mutually exclusive. The war in Lebanon and the uprising in the occupied lands have made it abundantly clear that it is impossible to stop the bloodshed without resolving the Palestinian problem on fair terms.

Israeli peace activists maintain that not only must the physical presence of Israeli forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip be removed but the Palestinians must also be allowed to determine their own destiny, without any interference in their affairs.

This has come to be a widespread view in Israeli society. Dissatisfaction with the upshot of Camp David and the stalemate of the "peace process" have caused a change in the public mood and made the idea of an international Middle East conference far more attractive to many.

Camp David implied that it would be possible to induce Egypt to act without its Arab neighbours. But by the mid-'80s it had become clear that this was not so, that Egypt could not ignore the trends of public opinion in other Arab

countries and, moreover, that it was seeking to restore its position in the Arab world.

In January 1985, the press reported a certain change in Egypt's own attitude to the Camp David policy. President Mubarak, speaking before the People's Assembly after King Hussein, did not respond to his criticism of the Camp David accords, but declared that a closer Egyptian-Jordanian relationship would help the Arabs "safeguard their lands from aggression and recover what had been seized by force."

One of the principles of a Middle East settlement enunciated by Jordan and supported by Egypt was "the necessity for the PLO to participate in any negotiation on an equal footing with other states and the recognition of the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people."

That was quite a pronounced departure from the "Camp David principles" and it meant one thing: Egypt would readily accept another plan for a Middle East settlement if it was more in line with the common Arab and Palestinian interests.

Of course, the prevailing view in the world community that the PLO was the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people played a significant role here.

In the long run, the United States also realised that there were no further prospects for its former Middle East policy. While talking about "human rights", Washington also had to react in one way or another to the calls of the world community for pressure to be brought to bear on Israel—the United States' "strategic ally" in the Middle East—so as to assure some progress at least towards resolving the problem of the Palestinians.

The Palestinian population staged an uprising in the occupied territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in December 1987. The Israeli Army and police used firearms, tear gas and stone-throwers to quell it. Hundreds of Palestinians were killed or wounded. This act of violence against unarmed people once more drew the attention of the world public to the situation in the occupied lands. Anti-Palestinian terrorism was strongly condemned in

practically every country and by various international organisations. Israel came under the fire of scathing criticism, which revealed its inhuman approach to the Palestinian problem.

So the partners in the "strategic alliance" had to either cling to the Camp David accords, which no longer held any significance for peace in the region, thus incurring political losses, or do something in view of the actual turn of events.

THE SHULTZ PLAN

Scanning the newspapers and periodicals of the last seven years, you cannot avoid noticing the way in which the US stance on the Middle East has been changing. Even a simple comparison of the American proposals for a Middle East settlement made, for example, in 1982, with those of 1988, will clearly demonstrate that the US administration has been moving away, step by step, from what was once a dogmatic commitment to the Camp David scheme.

A Palestinian political journalist once told me he felt that for the past decade the United States had constantly been trying to hold on to the handrails of a departing train. But I find his assertion only partially true. Indeed, the United States more often than not put forward an initiative following a major event in the Middle East region.

On September 1, 1982, when Beirut was still surrounded by Israeli troops, the American administration came forward with a Reagan Plan. It spoke of the need to reconcile Israel's legitimate concern for security with the no less legitimate rights of the Palestinians at the negotiating table, in fact, through direct talks. The United States had a special responsibility because, the document claimed, "no other nation is in a position to deal with the key parties to the conflict on the basis of trust and reliability."

Under the Reagan Plan, the Palestinians were to have full autonomy in deciding their internal affairs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a specified period. A five-year

transition period, following the election of Palestinian organs of self-government, was to prove that the Palestinians were capable of managing their affairs under an autonomy and that the security of Israel was not threatened in any way.

Since the project was strongly reminiscent of Begin's "administrative autonomy", the US government tried to create a semblance of a "balanced" policy by intimating its disagreement with the unlimited construction of Israeli settlements.

As a matter of fact, the Reagan Plan was a derivative of the Camp David scheme. The document betrayed a clear intention of keeping both Syria and the Soviet Union out of the process of elaborating a peace settlement in the region. The principle of self-determination was once more replaced by the principle of self-rule. The American plan rejected the idea of an independent Palestinian state. It did not so much as mention the PLO, the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people.

Yet even this generally pro-Israeli plan turned out to be unacceptable to the Begin government which, regarding the West Bank as part of "indivisible Eretz Israel" (the entire historic Palestine—*Ed.*), had no intention of pulling its troops out from any of the occupied territories, let alone from all of them. On the contrary, from the autumn of 1982 onwards, Israel, as if to counterbalance the Reagan Plan, stepped up the construction of settlements in the occupied territories. That kind of action was so demonstrative that the US halted its initiative and stopped insisting on it being accepted by the Israeli Cabinet.

However, that did not mean that the US had given up the idea of pressing on with the Camp David process. An attempt was made at dragging Lebanon into it, a country torn asunder by internal feuding and half-occupied by the Israelis. Under pressure from the US and the occupation authorities, that country's government signed a Lebanese-Israeli "peace" agreement in May 1983. The fast-mounting popular opposition, however, led to the Lebanese government repudiating the agreement within less than a year. So the Camp David process ground to a halt even in Lebanon,

where the conditions for imposing it on the Arabs seemed to be most favourable.

On October 22, 1987, Ronald Reagan announced that the United States had worked out a "new" plan, and Secretary of State George Shultz set out for the Middle East with it. Under that plan, a peace settlement in the Middle East was to be achieved by direct talks between Israel and the Arabs. The Arab side was to be represented by Jordan, including some Palestinians in its delegation. The American proposals did not rule out the possibility of Syria participating in a dialogue with Israel as well, but within the framework of separate negotiations.

In fact, there was little new about Washington's new plan: Washington was once more counting on separate negotiations, on limited Palestinian participation and on keeping a number of Arab countries out of the process of elaborating a Middle East settlement. On the other hand, the idea of an international conference began to be treated in Washington not as "unacceptable" but as "unrealistic".

In October 1987, assessing the reaction of the parties concerned, the new US Secretary of Defence, Frank Carlucci, referred to the situation in the region as a "stalemate". The government of Israel, he said, was unable to decide on whether to participate in an international conference, while the Arabs were adamantly opposed to direct talks.

The Palestinian uprising, which erupted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in December 1987, seriously alarmed Washington. The US Ambassador in Tel Aviv, Thomas Pickering, called on Yitzhak Shamir and urged him to stop using troops and live ammunition against the demonstrators. The administration itself warned thousands of American tourists not to visit East Jerusalem during the Christmas holidays. Finally, the US delegation in the Security Council merely abstained during the vote on a resolution condemning Israel's policy in the occupied territories, thus allowing it to become an official UN document.

This turn of events seemed to come as a surprise to the

Israeli government. Indeed, only a week before that, Pickering had assured Shamir that Washington was not going to make any moves, and that it "appreciated" the motives behind Israel's policy in the occupied territories. The day before the Security Council vote, Shamir sent a message to the White House asking for support. However, Washington ignored the request.

In doing so, the White House was proceeding from rather serious external political factors. Official statements calling for an immediate end to the bloodshed and a search for political solutions to the problem of the occupied territories were promulgated by the Foreign Offices of Great Britain, France, West Germany, Italy and a number of other NATO countries. Washington clearly did not want any further disagreements within NATO. Moreover, censuring Israel at a regional level could score important points for the Americans in relations with the Arab world and, perhaps, induce it into broader cooperation with the United States.

Obviously, the Palestinian uprising forced what was, perhaps, the most essential change in the US Middle East policy. This was a departure from the Camp David programme, if not from the whole Camp David scheme.

Writing in New York's *Newsday* in February 1988, Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State and architect of the first Sinai agreement, pointed out that the present conditions were totally different from those that had once produced Camp David. There was a wide rift in Israel and no Arab leader was capable of putting forward any initiatives independently. At the same time, Kissinger argued that it was wrong to have an idyllic picture of an international conference reaching its logical conclusion after mutual compromises achieved through bilateral negotiations—this was nothing but a "mirage". He stated explicitly that Israel had to recognise the simple fact that it could not go on endlessly occupying Arab territories against the will of the local populations. Jordan, or some "consortium of moderate Arab states" must assume responsibility for the civil administration of the West Bank and Gaza areas.

Henry Kissinger rejected, however, the idea of any PLO involvement in it.

He noted that US diplomacy must acknowledge the possibility of a Middle East peace conference, but only on terms which would assure US interests. In other words, he called for a kind of compromise solution.

The article appeared just before George Shultz's trip to the Middle East and was seen as a feeler to ascertain the positions of the parties concerned. In Jerusalem, Shultz fenced himself off, if politely, from Camp David when he intimated to Israeli representatives that the "schedule" for negotiations on a Middle East settlement, fixed by the Camp David accords, no longer answered the call of the times.

A readjusted American programme was put forward by late February 1988, and it came to be known as the Shultz Plan.

In general terms, it provided for holding Israeli-Arab negotiations within the framework of an International Conference on the Middle East, with the participation of Israel, those Arab countries concerned and permanent members of the Security Council; for drafting a document on the interim status of the occupied territories as an autonomy and holding an election for Palestinian executive bodies; for withdrawing the Israeli troops, upon the introduction of autonomy, from the Palestinian towns to their strategic bases within the occupation zone; and working out, in the course of further negotiations, the final status of the occupied territories as part of a general peace treaty between Israel and the Arabs.

The projected plan could not, of course, remove the main source of tension in the Middle East region—the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Indeed, how could anyone expect the Palestinian problem to be resolved by substituting Israeli military control for Israeli occupation, and keeping the PLO from deciding the destiny of its own people?

So it is not surprising that the Arab countries, though they listened attentively to what Shultz had to say, declined the American proposals.

On the other hand, Prime Minister Shamir unequivocally declared that he was opposed to any idea of convening an international peace conference, adding that Israel would not be pressured into holding negotiations by the Arabs staging protest strikes in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Right-wing forces in Israel reaffirmed their reluctance to leave the occupied lands. The US Secretary's of State idea had reached a dead-end. Nor did anything come out of Shultz's trip to the Middle East early in June 1988, right after the Soviet-American summit in Moscow. On visiting Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Israel, the US Secretary of State assured everybody that he would bring the positions of the conflicting parties closer together by urging an Arab-Israeli settlement on the basis of Security Council Resolution 242. This called for territory to be traded for peace and for due consideration to be paid to the legitimate political rights of the Palestinians, as well as the security interests of Israel and other states of the region. The day before Shultz was due in Israel, Tel Aviv left no room for any illusions about the possible outcome of this round of shuttle diplomacy, when Shamir declared that Israel was not going to pull its troops out of any West Bank or Gaza areas. "Hasn't it yet become clear to all, friend and foe, that this is our country and our homeland as it exists and that there will never be any other?" the Prime Minister said.

The Shultz visit produced nothing new, said the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Bayan*. Israel was intransigent. In considering the "US peace plan" for a Middle East settlement, the paper also noted that the American peace initiative remained fruitless because Washington refused to recognise the PLO and the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent state of their own.

If Shultz really wanted to find any ground for a settlement, the Syrian *As-Saura* newspaper noted, he would have to thoroughly revise the entire US policy in the region. Americans would have to stop regarding the Palestinians simply as refugees whose lot could be improved in the same way as they had "improved" the lot of their own Indians. The Palestinians had a homeland, and

they should be given the right of return and self-determination. As for the Palestinians themselves, the inhabitants of the occupied territories, the paper said, they would respond to the Shultz visit with a mass protest strike.

The Arab world actually turned down the American plan for a Middle East settlement by unanimously calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and reaffirming support for the Palestine Liberation Organisation. That was how Reuter's news agency summed up the Arab summit in Algiers.

Although there was no reference to the Shultz Plan in its concluding documents, it was clear that the decisions of that forum, adopted unanimously by the way, had nothing to do with the American "initiative". The United States has to finally understand that the programme it has advanced is unrealistic because it is unacceptable not only to the Israeli "hawks" but to the entire Arab world as well. A mutually acceptable compromise should obviously be sought elsewhere, and incidentally, Arab leaders have expressed their consensus as to where it could be found. In the communique they issued at the end of the conference, they declared their full support for a plenipotentiary international conference on the Middle East with the participation of the countries involved in the conflict, the five permanent members of the Security Council and, of course, the PLO.

THE SHAMIR PLAN

Militant Zionists have always admired Shamir's adherence to the Begin belief that the more land there is under Israeli control, the better it is for Israel. So when Begin resigned in the autumn of 1983, they put Shamir up as candidate for premiership, confident that he could be relied on to continue the former policy.

Their calculations were right. In the very first few months of his rule, Shamir staked on banding together the

right-wing parties on the platform of common annexationist ambitions, chauvinism and racial discrimination against the Arabs. He promised the rightists that he would stand by the three Likud "Nos": "No" to a return to the 1967 borders; "No" to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state; and "No" to giving the Arab part of Jerusalem back to the Arabs.

In the 1984 parliamentary elections, neither the governing extreme right Likud bloc, nor the opposing Zionist Ma'arach "Labour Alignment" polled enough votes to get over half the seats in the Knesset. The leaders of both blocs set about looking for ways towards a compromise arrangement with the smaller parties and even between themselves. Their efforts ended up in the formation of a "national unity" government, including both Likud and Ma'arach.

When Yitzhak Shamir took over from Shimon Peres as Head of the Cabinet in October 1986, the rightists launched yet another wave of terror in the occupied lands. The General Syndicate of Workers' Organisations in Nablus was shut down for a year, and its General Secretary was put under administrative arrest. The Syndicate's branch offices in Hebron and East Jerusalem were also shut down. In Rafah, Israeli soldiers broke into a lycee, beat up scores of schoolchildren and threw tear-gas grenades into the premises; a hundred and fifty teenagers were injured and as many arrested. These actions were incited by extremist speeches.

The Head of the Sochnut settler administration, Matityahu Drobles, declared that "the green line will be wiped off the face of the earth." And Ariel Sharon called for Israel to start hounding down Palestinian leaders and bombing Palestinian camps in Lebanon.

I venture to suggest that it was at this point that Yitzhak Shamir's and Shimon Peres's political concepts began to diverge. There were two reasons for this, to my mind. Firstly, the Zionist circles realised that there was a real possibility of fascism taking over the country if the present situation continued. Secondly, realistically-minded politicians within Ma'arach already sensed the danger of an imminent explosion—an outburst of mass riots in the oc-

cupied lands. And that threatened a serious upheaval in the country, to say the least.

The parting of the ways was clear to see in February 1987 when the Israeli leaders' foreign contacts showed them to be divided on a Middle East peace conference. On a visit to Washington, Prime Minister Shamir made it clear that he was adamantly opposed to such a conference. Peres took a different standpoint. He told President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt that an international conference was worth being worked towards if it meant paving the way for direct talks.

So what was Peres's position? I say "Peres's position" rather than "the position of the Ma'arach leaders" deliberately, because they held different views on the problem of an international conference. Those adhering to a realistic platform understood that it was incumbent upon Israel to agree to participate in an international conference and sit down at the negotiating table with all those involved in the Middle East conflict and, naturally, with the Soviet Union and the United States. That group was gradually coming round to realising the urgency for negotiating, with the genuine representatives of the Palestinian people—that is, the PLO. However, the earlier viewpoint, that it would be better to avoid an international conference, was also maintained, perhaps most consistently by Yitzhak Rabin.

Yet what I want to stress at this point is Peres's position, if only because it had the greatest support within Ma'arach at that time. Peres was in favour of a conference. At first, he talked about it in a roundabout way, referring to an international "umbrella", and then he began advocating a conference quite openly. But in so doing Peres laid down some preconditions.

He insisted that an international conference must have the sole objective of getting the Israelis and the Arabs to sit down at the negotiating table. From then on, the conflicting parties were to conduct direct talks to settle their problems. In the long run, the international conference was to approve the results of the direct talks.

Another precondition concerned the Soviet Union's participation in the process of settlement, and this was in no way related to the Israeli-Arab conflict. Peres called on the USSR to "change its attitude" concerning the exit of Soviet Jews and to restore diplomatic relations with Israel.

And, finally, Peres laid down yet another Camp David-style precondition: the Palestine Liberation Organisation must not participate in the peace talks.

In May 1987 Shamir responded to Peres's utterances with a statement that even if the United States provided guarantees that the international conference would bring about direct talks and even if the USSR re-established diplomatic relations with Israel, he would still not participate in it.

This position was followed up in October 1987 when the Likud leaders decided to launch a propaganda campaign in Israel to convince the public that an international conference would threaten Israel's national interests and its very existence. Moreover, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shimon Peres, was about to leave for the UN General Assembly session, Shamir announced that whatever agreement he might arrive at there regarding an international conference, it would not bind the government to anything.

Such were the positions of the two blocs within one coalition when the Palestinian people's uprising produced some essential changes in the Middle East situation and, consequently, in the American policy in the region. The differences between Shamir and Peres were at once reflected in their attitude to the Shultz Plan. Peres expressed his full consent, accepting the proposal for an international conference.

As for Shamir and the Likud ministers, they, of course, rejected the Shultz Plan. All that the Prime Minister agreed to was a token international opening of direct talks; he refused to accept any intervention of international factors in the direct talks.

But didn't Yitzhak Shamir put forward his own counter-plan to balance his rejection of an international conference?

He did. True, it was a rather general, sketchy kind of plan. But the essence was clear: to carry on the Camp

David process by promoting the dialogue with Jordan; and to work towards self-rule for the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

It is not difficult to see that Shamir was simply offering the same package that Menachem Begin had taken along with him to Camp David for his negotiations with Sadat. Shamir's concept did look moth-eaten; it implied a separate deal instead of an international forum involving all the parties concerned, and a kind of pseudo-autonomy instead of independence for the Palestinians.

THE PEACE PLAN

I must confess I found writing this last chapter far more of a problem than the previous ones. This is because here I am dealing with the plans that have come to be a counterbalance to the American and Israeli projects for a Middle East settlement—I mean the Arab and Soviet plans.

I wouldn't be surprised if some reader said: "Naturally, you are trying to justify your policy in the Middle East region and that of your Arab allies. But you don't admit to your own mistakes and you don't see the positive side in the initiative of other states. That is why it is so difficult for the West to come to an agreement with you on the resolution of the Middle East problems."

I have not invented this comment. It was made by a colleague of mine, an Egyptian political analyst. But I want to reply to it here and now.

Arabs who come to the Soviet Union often remark on how much prominence is given to the Middle East problems in our press and how keen Soviet people are on having these problems resolved. Nor has this been a recent development, by a long chalk. Over forty years ago, on November 3, 1947, to be precise, the Soviet delegation to the UN moved proposals for effective international guarantees to prevent war in the Middle East.

Those proposals have since been forgotten by many.

Yet this was a mistake, for they could well have spared the peoples of the region a good many misfortunes. The USSR proposed that Britain's Palestine Mandate should be relinquished from early 1948 and that the occupation forces should be withdrawn within three to four months. It was proposed that an Arab and a Jewish state should rapidly be set up in Palestine. During the period of transition, the administration of Palestine should be exercised by the UN, through a special committee formed of representatives of the member countries of the Security Council. Such a committee would have directed the provisional governments of the two states and supervised their parliamentary elections, the formation of authorities, and the activities of the armed units of both political entities on the territory of Palestine.

Those were the Soviet proposals which demonstrated an unprejudiced approach to solving the problem, with due regard for the interests of all parties concerned. The Soviet draft envisaged the UN as playing an important role right from the opening stages. The Soviet peace initiatives on the Middle East then, as now, called for collective efforts in resolving the problems and suggested a basically simple system for putting them into action.

Nevertheless, the Soviet proposals were rejected. Great Britain, the US and their allies could come to a compromise regarding the repudiation of the British Mandate, withdrawal of occupation forces and creation of two states in Palestine. But they were intransigent on the issue of a plenipotentiary committee being formed of members of the Security Council to ensure the safeguards of peace for the period of transition.

Naturally, one can object that the Soviet proposals could equally well have proved ineffective in averting a crisis situation. But at that time the crisis was just in the bud. Much depended on united action by the major powers, on the moral climate their action created and on the impact it had on the peoples of the region.

The idea of an international Middle East peace conference, as an alternative to separate negotiations, has been

recognised by most politicians and political analysts of the region. But it has been a long, difficult process.

Take the so-called Fahd Plan, advanced by Saudi Arabia in August 1981.

It contained the following points:

— Israel to withdraw from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, including Arab Jerusalem.

— Israeli settlements built on Arab land after 1967 to be dismantled.

— A guarantee of freedom of worship for all religions in holy places.

— An affirmation of the right of the Palestinian Arab people to return to their homes, and compensation for those who do not wish to return.

— The West Bank and Gaza Strip to have a transitional period under the auspices of the United Nations, not exceeding several months.

— An independent Palestinian state should be set up with Jerusalem as its capital.

— All states in the region should be able to live in peace.

— The UN or member-states of the UN to guarantee the carrying out of these principles.

Saudi Arabia's initiative, though provoking differing responses from Arab countries, was a tremendous achievement, to my mind.

For one thing, the Fahd Plan was the first plan for a Middle East settlement to encompass a common programme, uniting the most important and most "recognised" principles of settlement.

Secondly, this plan was the first attempt at formulating a position on a Middle East settlement which would be acceptable to all Arab countries—both "radical" and "moderate".

Finally, Saudi Arabia, high in international esteem, displayed a firm determination to repudiate the Camp David process.

The critics of the Fahd Plan still consider two major things to be unacceptable about it: the plan did not so

much as mention the PLO, the legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people, nor did it indicate the specific ways and international mechanisms for realising the objectives it set. The November 1981 Arab summit in Fez, Morocco, rejected the Fahd Plan.

All the same, the events in the region pushed the Arab world into hammering out a united policy on a Middle East settlement. Israeli terrorism in South Lebanon and then the Reagan Plan made it a matter of extreme urgency for the Arabs to draw up a programme of their own. Such a programme was built upon the plan for a Middle East settlement, which was adopted at Fez in November 1982, based on the Fahd Plan. Several important points were specified and modified in the new, Fez Plan. But the main thing was that the Fez Plan called for the recognition and reaffirmation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the exercise of their national rights under the leadership of the PLO, their sole and legitimate representative.

At the same time it was clear that the Camp David accords had for a long time impeded the resumption of the Geneva peace conference on the Middle East. In view of this, and also the development of the situation in the region, in 1981 the Soviet Union called for resuming a collective search for an overall settlement in the region. It proposed convening a special international conference to be attended by all parties concerned, including the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people.

Israel's aggression against Lebanon and the consequent tragedy of the Palestinians and Lebanese had a tremendous impact on public opinion in the USSR. On September 15, 1982, the Soviet leadership came forward with a proposal that immediate steps be taken for a just and durable settlement of the Middle East situation, stating the principles such a settlement should be based on.

First. There must be a strict observance of the principle that no land may be seized by means of aggression. This means, in particular, that all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 must be returned to the Arabs. The

borders between Israel and its Arab neighbours must be declared inviolable.

Second. The Palestinian Arab people's inalienable right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent state in the Palestinian lands to be liberated from Israeli occupation—the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—must be assured in practice. The Palestinian refugees must be given an opportunity, envisaged by UN resolutions, to return to their homes or to receive appropriate compensation for the property they have left behind.

Third. East Jerusalem must be returned to the Arabs and become an inalienable part of the Palestinian state. Throughout Jerusalem there must be freedom of access for all believers to the places of worship of three religions.

Fourth. The right of all states in the region to secure and independent existence and development must be ensured. This must naturally be on completely reciprocal terms, for nobody's security can be ensured at the expense of others'.

Fifth. The state of war must be ended and peace established between Arab states and Israel. This means that all the parties to the conflict, including Israel and the Palestinian state, must pledge to respect each other's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and resolve whatever disputes may arise by peaceful means, through negotiations.

Sixth. International guarantees of settlement must be worked out and adopted—the role of guarantors could be assumed by the permanent members of the UN Security Council or the Security Council as a whole.

The main principles set forth by the Soviet Union coincided with the Fez Summit Peace Proposal, which prompted some to maintain that the Soviet plan was "one-sided" and had pro-Arab overtones. But most of the world's nations found the plan to be balanced, taking into account the actual situation in the region and corresponding to standards of international law and UN resolutions on the problem. There was no response, however, to the Soviet proposals either from Washington or Tel Aviv.

Late in July 1984, the USSR reaffirmed the principles it had earlier formulated for a Middle East settlement and suggested specific ways in which to bring it about. It expressed the conviction that there was only one correct approach towards resolving the Middle East problem. This was by calling an international conference, in the basic form of workshops or commissions consisting of representatives of all the parties to the conference, to consider such key issues of the settlement as the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the delimitation of frontiers; the Palestinian problem and the issue of Jerusalem; the ending of the state of war and the establishment of peace; the security problems of the states involved in the conflict; and international guarantees. Bilateral groups could also be created, if need be, to work out accords concerning only two specific countries. The plenary sessions would review workshop conclusions and the conference decisions would be approved by consensus. In the opening stages the conference might be attended by Ministers of Foreign Affairs and subsequently by specially appointed representatives.

While moving the said proposals, the Soviet Union called on all the parties to the conflict to act by soberly considering each other's legitimate rights and interests, and on all other states to facilitate, not obstruct, the pursuit of such a settlement. Somewhat later the USSR proposed setting up a special committee within the framework of the UN Security Council to make actual arrangements for the conference.

These Soviet proposals had widespread repercussions around the world. So much so, that a number of Israeli and American politicians, including Prime Minister Shimon Peres, claimed that the Soviet Union was trying to change the image of its policy in the Middle East.

When dramatic events in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in late 1987 and early 1988 once more attracted the attention of the international community to the problem of attaining a Middle East settlement, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Eduard Shevardnadze, proposed that

the Security Council should immediately set about preparing an international conference on the Middle East. He said in a message to the UN Secretary-General, Perez de Cuellar, that the Security Council might meet at Foreign Minister level. The conference was to ensure a durable peace and security in the region through multilateral efforts.

A few days later Hosni Mubarak sent a message to Israel's Prime Minister Shamir. Describing the West Bank and Gaza situation as extremely dangerous, the Egyptian President urged Shamir to accept the idea of an international peace conference as the only means of achieving peace in the region.

That was one of the most devastating blows to Camp David. There were more to follow. A month later, King Hussein of Jordan reaffirmed his country's rejection of any bilateral accord to resolve the Middle East crisis. He stressed that only a comprehensive resolution of the conflict could restore peace in the region and called for an international conference on the Middle East to be convened under the auspices of the UN, with the participation of all parties concerned, including the PLO and the five permanent members of the Security Council. At about the same time, Egypt's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Esmat Abdel-Meguid, speaking in Parliament, declared: "Egypt welcomes the coming visit of US Secretary of State Shultz and any American plan he may bring with him, provided that this plan envisages a comprehensive and definite resolution of the Palestinian problem, that this resolution is carried out through the medium of an international peace conference, and that the plan does not contain the autonomy formula envisaged by the Camp David accords."

American diplomatic analysts rightfully assessed these requirements as tantamount to rejecting the American attempt to revive the concept of Palestinian autonomy contained in the Camp David accords.

On April 9, 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev met in the Kremlin with Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO Executive

Committee. They both acknowledged that more favourable prerequisites had been emerging in recent times for the resolution of the Middle East crisis.

On behalf of the Soviet people, Mikhail Gorbachev expressed solidarity with the self-sacrificing struggle of the Palestinian people. The upsurge of the Palestinian popular movement, he noted, had now become a major impulse for seeking practical solutions for a comprehensive and equitable Middle East settlement.

Mikhail Gorbachev presented the Soviet view on the essential points of such a settlement. The most important prerequisite for the settlement was the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied in 1967—the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan Heights. The Palestinian people had the same right to self-determination as was assured to the people of Israel, and it was entirely up to the Palestinians themselves to dispose of that right. An international conference under the auspices of the UN was the most effective method of settlement. Its legal basis was the recognition by all participants of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination. The conference was to be attended by representatives of all parties involved in the conflict, including the Palestinian Arab people, as well as the permanent members of the Security Council.

It should be noted that the Soviet Union is not opposed to intermediate moves and stages on the way to an overall settlement, nor does it pretend to know the ultimate truth. It is ready and willing to see the urgent problems resolved by the efforts of all nations through dialogue and extensive contact.

On May 20, 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev met in the Kremlin with Esmat Abdel-Meguid, Egypt's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was in the USSR on an official visit.

Mikhail Gorbachev and Abdel-Meguid were unanimous in noting that the actual prerequisites were taking shape for a comprehensive and equitable settlement in the Middle East.

Mikhail Gorbachev emphasised that the Soviet Union was working hard for an early resolution of this most involved and

deep-seated regional conflict. It was necessary, he said, to stand by realities. The Palestinian issue was the key to the settlement. No headway could be made without the participation of the PLO. It was equally important, however, to take into account the interests of other parties—Syria, Jordan and Israel. The present situation offered an opportunity to bring about an international conference under the auspices of the UN. This opportunity should not be missed. As for the Soviet Union, it was prepared to cooperate with all participants in the peace process.

CONCLUSION

There will be no peace in the Middle East until the government of Israel agrees to negotiate with the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people. This was stated in a document signed by three prominent American diplomats—Samuel Winfield Lewis, former Ambassador to Israel, Hermann Frederick Eilts, former Ambassador to Egypt, and William Quandt of the National Security Council under the Carter administration. *The Washington Post*, which published this document in the spring of 1988, stressed that all three men, who had been active in drafting the Camp David accords, were now convinced that no separate deals would produce a settlement of the conflict in the region.

The American diplomats' document sealed the fate of the Camp David era, as it were, and additionally, made it clear that various prerequisites were now in evidence for a new leaf to be turned in the story of coexistence and good-neighbourly relations.

To begin with, according to the diplomats, the Americans and Israelis have to forswear all allegiance to the Camp David process. This process no longer exists. This is not only because all the parties to the Camp David accords have long since left the political stage, but also because it is no longer merely the Arabs, but also most Israelis who have realised the futility of all attempts to secure peace, if only temporarily, by means of separate deals. The only ones who do not want to give up Camp David today are those right-wing Israeli leaders who, together with Begin, presided over its initiation.

Clearly, the Israeli leaders have to cure themselves of

the "Palestinian syndrome". The people of Israel in their mass are ready to cooperate with the Palestinian people, to live in peace with them and maintain good-neighbourly relations. A dialogue with the Palestinians has been conducted by Israel's Communists, Liberals and Left-Zionist leaders. The PLO leadership has agreed to seek a fair Middle East settlement, taking into account the interests of the Israeli people.

It is evidently time for this example to be followed by those Palestinian leaders in the PLO, who do not see clearly that there can be no good-neighbourly relations without due regard for the interests of all parties to the conflict. The very reason for preparing a peace conference is to let the peoples of this region open a new chapter in the development of their industries, trade and culture, rather than to create domineering forces or establish one's supremacy. Consequently, it is necessary to check one's own arrogance and renounce the cult of force, radicalism and the denial of another's right to an independent and secure existence.

In short, it is necessary to learn something that is not so easy to learn, something that demands energy and courage; hatred must be renounced, and mutual offences forgotten. It is necessary to learn to live in peace.

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Вячеслав Иванович Катамидзе

«КЭМП-ДЭВИД»: КТО ВЫИГРАЛ И КТО ПРОИГРАЛ

На английском языке

Цена 35 к.

Vyacheslav KATAMIDZE
Camp Devid: Winners and Losers

Dear Reader,

We hope that you have found this publication interesting and useful. We would be most grateful if you could fill out this questionnaire. All you have to do is put a cross in the appropriate box, or, where such boxes are not provided, express your opinion briefly and legibly.

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001 ☐	002 ☐	003 ☐	004 ☐	005 ☐

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3. What is your opinion of this publication in terms of ...

	Good	Satis-factory	Could be better	Hard to say
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...up-to-dateness?	025 ☐	026 ☐	027 ☐	028 ☐
...convincing argumentation?	029 ☐	030 ☐	031 ☐	032 ☐
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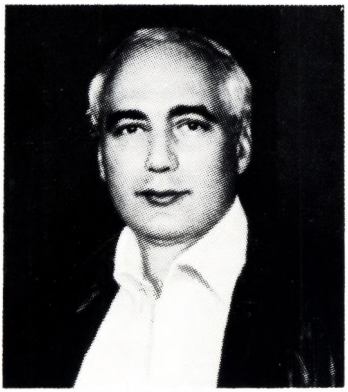

Vyacheslav Katamidze (born in 1944) is a writer on international affairs, and has previously worked as a reporter and military interpreter. His commentaries, notably for Radio Moscow, have for a long time been concerned with the Middle East, where he once served as a UN military observer in the Suez Canal zone, and with other flash-points around the world. He is the author of several booklets published by the Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, and his articles appear in the Soviet and foreign press.

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